

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Your Role on the Indoor Air Quality Action Team

Indoor Air Quality



Tools for Schools

"Every school [in the district] has a Healthy Schools Team dedicated to making the school safer and healthier.

The IAQ Tools for Schools checklists were very helpful; everyone uses them."

— Robin Chappell, District Health Official, Walpole, MA

Indoor Air Quality and Health

The air quality inside your school affects the health and comfort of every student and staff member. EPA's Science Advisory Board consistently ranks indoor air pollution among the top five environmental risks to public health. Poor indoor air quality (IAQ) is about more than just comfort. It can cause or contribute to short- and long-term health problems, including asthma, respiratory tract infection and disease, allergic reactions, headaches, nasal congestion, eye and skin irritations, coughing, sneezing, fatigue, dizziness, and nausea.

As a school-based health professional—district health officer, nurse, hygienist, or dietician—you are responsible for the health and well-being of staff and students. School nurses, in particular, can play a primary role in the early detection of an IAQ problem when seeing children who are sick. Illnesses due to poor indoor air quality may not, however, produce easily recognizable symptoms. If multiple pollutants are involved, tracing the causes of the student's discomfort or illness will be your challenge.

Improving indoor air quality can reduce the number of student visits to the nurse's office, reduce absenteeism due to illness, and enhance the general health and well-being of all students and staff.

Ensure the Good Health of the Students in Your Care

You can help the students you care for by using EPA's one-stop resource for your school building's health—the *IAQ Tools for Schools* Kit. The Kit gives your school a practical plan for protecting and improving indoor air and explains your role in the IAQ Action Team. Your input can help the team identify the sources and types of indoor pollutants. Specifically, the Kit features forms, checklists, and a problem-solving wheel for:

- Tracking health-related complaints of students and staff and identifying patterns.
- Incorporating sensitivities to IAQ problems into student health records.
- Educating the school population about indoor air quality and health.

The IAQ problem-solving wheel helps nurses link health symptoms with possible IAQ problems. The Kit also includes a manual, *Indoor Air Pollution: An Introduction for Health Professionals*, that provides an overview of acute conditions, patterns that point to particular pollutants, and suggestions for appropriate remedial action. The Kit's *Asthma Companion Piece* identifies environmental asthma triggers, showing how *IAQ Tools for Schools* can reduce them in your school.

USE THE ENCLOSED CARD TO ORDER THE *INDOOR AIR QUALITY TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS* KIT TODAY
VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT www.epa.gov/iaq/schools

INDOOR AIR QUALITY IN SCHOOLS

Maintaining good indoor air quality in your school means:

- Controlling airborne pollutants
- Bringing in and distributing adequate outside air
- Controlling moisture and mold
- Maintaining acceptable temperature and humidity

Sources of pollutants in and around schools:

INDOOR SOURCES

- Students and staff with communicable diseases
- Classroom pets
- Excess moisture and mold
- Dry-erase markers and similar pens
- Dust and chalk
- Cleaning materials
- Personal care products
- Odors and volatile organic compounds from paint, caulk, adhesives
- Insects and other pests
- Odors from trash
- Radon

Potential high-pollution areas

- Science laboratories
- Vocational arts areas
- Copy/print areas
- Smoking lounges
- Food preparation areas

OUTDOOR SOURCES

- Pollen, dust, and fungal spores carried in from outside on shoes and clothing
- Vehicle emissions or unsanitary debris near building air intakes
- Pesticides used on school grounds
- Dumpster odors
- Leakage from underground storage tanks

The Issues

Indoor levels of air pollutants can be 2-5 times higher, and occasionally 100 times higher, than outdoor levels. Nearly 55 million people, 20 percent of the U.S. population, spend their days inside elementary and secondary schools. And according to a 1995 federal government report, an estimated 50 percent of the nation's schools have problems linked to poor indoor air quality. IAQ problems can cause discomfort and contribute to short- and long-term health problems for students and staff.

The Solution

IAQ problems can be much less expensive and time-consuming to prevent than to fix. EPA's *IAQ Tools for Schools Kit* provides you with resources and checklists to help evaluate your school's indoor air quality and prevent IAQ problems. The Kit also offers easy-to-use steps for identifying and correcting current IAQ problems.

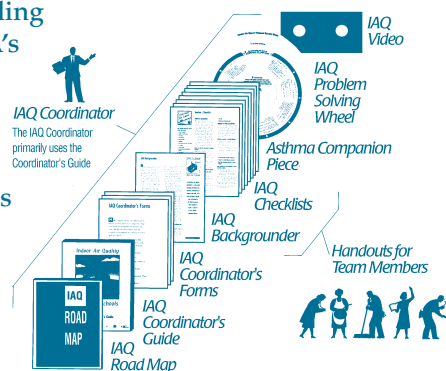
The Team

The awareness and effort of a team of individuals will help ensure that your school improves its indoor air quality. The checklists in the *IAQ Tools for Schools Kit* provide a thorough but simple means for all IAQ Action Team members to contribute, including the IAQ coordinator, administrators, teachers and staff, facility managers, health professionals, maintenance crews, and others.

The Rewards *(in addition to good indoor air quality!)*

By using the Kit successfully, your school will have the opportunity to:

- Receive public recognition for outstanding environmental leadership through EPA's Awards Program.
- Serve as a role model or mentor to other schools.
- Work with EPA to communicate success through case studies.
- Have its website link on EPA's IAQ page for other schools to learn from your IAQ efforts.



Order the *IAQ Tools for Schools Kit* today!